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Identical letters dated 23 March 2011 from the Permanent Representative of Israel to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council

I write to express my grave concern in the face of a very serious escalation of Palestinian terrorist attacks targeting innocent Israeli civilians, which threatens to undermine stability in our region.

Earlier today, at approximately 1500 local time, a bomb planted by terrorists exploded at a crowded bus stop outside the International Convention Centre in Jerusalem, just opposite the central bus station, killing a 58-year-old Israeli woman. Clearly intended to harm innocent civilians, this appalling and criminal attack also injured more than 40 people, according to initial reports, leaving three people in critical condition and five people in serious condition. The impact of the large explosion blew out the windows of two nearby buses — and could be heard throughout the City of Jerusalem.

This very troubling attack follows a marked increase in terrorist activity deliberately targeting Israeli civilians over the past several days by Hamas and other Palestinian terrorist organizations. Early today, Palestinian terrorists in the Gaza Strip fired two Grad-type Katyusha rockets at Be'er-Sheva, the largest city in southern Israel, which is home to more than 200,000 people. One of these rockets landed in the middle of a residential area in the city, injuring one man and damaging nearby buildings, including a synagogue.

In another incident today, terrorists in the Gaza Strip fired a Grad-type Katyusha rocket that landed in close proximity to the Israeli City of Ashdod — a city of more than 200,000 people — and launched some eight mortars into the areas of Eshkol and Sha'ar Hanegev in southern Israel.

In the past week, we have witnessed the launch of some 63 mortar shells and four rockets from the Gaza Strip into southern Israel, which represents an unprecedented increase in the projectile fire emanating from the Gaza Strip since the end of Operation Cast Lead in 2009. As I write this letter, terrorists in the Gaza Strip continue to fire mortars and rockets at Israel.

As I highlighted in previous letters to the Security Council dated 19 March 2011, 23 February 2011, 9 February 2011, 1 February 2011, 21 December 2010 and 9 December 2010, such attacks emanating from the Gaza Strip constitute a clear violation of international law and must be addressed with the utmost seriousness.

Israel holds the Hamas terrorist organization — the de facto authority in the Gaza Strip — fully responsible for all attacks emanating from the Gaza Strip. In response to the relentless attacks against it, Israel has exercised and will continue to exercise its right to self-defence, as appropriate, and will take all necessary measures to protect its citizens. Israel will also do all in its power to bring to justice the terrorists that committed the horrific crimes against its citizens today in Jerusalem.

The aforementioned attacks on Be'er-Sheva and Ashdod — which used Grad-type Katyusha missiles to target two of Israel's major population centres — provide another clear example of the dangerous and destabilizing consequences of the continued illegal smuggling of arms into the Gaza Strip. As I highlighted in my letters to the Security Council dated 19 March 2011 and 18 March 2011, last week we witnessed another attempt by the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Syrian Arab Republic to transfer weaponry — including C-704 advanced anti-ship missiles and mortar shells — to terrorist groups in the Gaza Strip when three concealed containers of arms, munitions and military equipment were captured on board the *Victoria* cargo vessel.

This attempt to transfer weaponry from Iran to terrorist organizations in the Gaza Strip through Syria constitutes a blatant violation of numerous Security Council resolutions, including Council resolution 1860 (2009) — and represents only the tip of the iceberg of these two countries' illegal efforts to smuggle weapons into the Gaza Strip.

In view of these troubling developments, Israel expects the Security Council, the Secretary-General and the international community to condemn all of these attacks in very clear terms and send a firm message to these terrorists and their patrons, who seek to escalate conflict. The Council and the international community must also devote much more attention to preventing the smuggling of arms into the Gaza Strip. Unfortunately, this important issue — an integral part of Council resolution 1860 (2009) — does not receive the appropriate attention that it deserves.

I should be grateful if you would have this letter distributed as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Meron **Reuben**
Ambassador
Permanent Mission of Israel to the United Nations